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THIS SAME JESUS:

MEDITATIONS ON
THE MANIFESTATIONS OF
CHRIST TO-DAY

BY

ROBERT KEABLE

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FOREWORD

MEDITATIONS written throughout a year with no more precise object than that indicated by the words of their original title, *Pro Salute Animæ*, may or may not be worthy of reproduction. Probably they are usually not. Yet such reprinting is what I have done in this little volume, although I may perhaps add that it is in response to many requests. These have reached me from various quarters, but each suggests that the short chapters might make a volume because of a certain characteristic of them all. Should this seem to be so to others, I shall be very glad that I have here selected, revised, and published them.

That the chapters have something in common may well be the case, for they were written under circumstances likely to conduce to that end. True, some were written in Basutoland; others, while in khaki, in Cape Town and in France. But all were written with the War dominant in my mind, and while what I believe to be one of its great lessons was being hammered into my consciousness. In Basutoland, as in Cape Town

and in France, a priest cannot but be aware that men are everywhere becoming increasingly indifferent to former authorities in religion, whether, as in my parish, because they are living a free life largely uninfluenced by public opinion or the world of books and men, or, as in France and to a great extent in England, because all conventionalities have been stript away, and nothing matters but the naked facts of life. In our time, then, the power of our Faith to-day to grip the soul is the supreme question. A man is little likely to be religious because his fathers were before him, or because the Church once had might to conquer Rome, or because *it is written* in the Bible—much as these things may mean to us. And personally I confess I am glad of it.

It seems to me, then, that the living JESUS, as an appreciable reality, must be more than ever our message, and that to preach Him so, all finesse, all latitudinarianism, all mere sentiment, must go. We professed Christians are obscuring the Christ we worship and seek to serve, because we allow ourselves to temporise, to dally with past quarrels, to waver, and to fear. True, to do otherwise might well tumble into ruin much that we love and would fain save; but as in this War, no work of art, no personal consideration, no earthly gain can be allowed to come between us and the Liberty for which we fight, so in religion, neither endowment nor establishment, neither

friendship nor ease, neither peace nor place must be allowed to separate us from Christ, and in consequence Christ from the world. For it is Almighty God's plan that the world should see Christ in us or not see Him at all.

Not particularly, but generally, these chapters point this out. I publish them because I believe that the final witness to our living Lord lies in the fact that He can be found to-day as truly as He was once to be found *in the fashion of a man*, and because I am convinced that if we Christians only acted on our faith and went straight ahead, without prejudice and without (above all) recrimination, we should achieve at once greater unities, and still *turn the world upside down* as the Apostles did. If it is true that these papers point in that direction, I very gladly see them brought together, and pray that God the Holy Ghost will overrule their many weaknesses to the greater glory of the Father and of the Virgin-born.

I have to acknowledge the kindness of the editor of *The Church Chronicle*, the provincial newspaper of the Church of the Province of South Africa, in offering these meditations to those especially whom that paper does not reach.

R. K.

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THIS SAME JESUS

I

MANIFESTATION

(St. Matthew ii. 1-12)

IT is little wonder that the coming of the kings to worship the King has taken such hold on the Christian imagination. They were Easterns, to begin with, and the East has always been a mystery. Then they came from the unknown, and they went back to the unknown—they with their scarlet and silver, with their rich trappings on camel and slave; and they left there at His feet gold that the King was never to wear, incense that the Priest was never to offer, and myrrh that was to anoint the Body of the Holy One only in death.

But there is in the story a deeper subject for meditation than any of these things. What we may well ask ourselves, wonderingly, is: Wherein lay that "Manifestation" by which the Church has named their coming? It is one of the things

we too easily pass over. There was certainly no pomp, either earthly or unearthly, about the house that the carpenter had hired, when Bethlehem became less crowded, to house the peasant girl and her Son. If Jerusalem were ignorant, certainly that little village did not know the identity of its guests. True, there had been stir in the royal city when the request of the Wise Men had been made known, but that could have done nothing to disillusion them from what had been their first mistake—the expectation that a palace and pageantry would have pointed Him out. Then the star could have been no precise guide, and like many other stars of that sort, the garish days eclipsed it. Or Mary may have expected their coming and told them; doubtless she was versed in the Scriptures; but I doubt it. It is not her way to say much who even then *kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.*

The fact is that this, like every other manifestation of JESUS to every other heart, was a thing ultimately outside the world's order. There are always stars—things beyond our ordering, and divine—that wise men know must be reckoned with, and that point the way to JESUS; but they never by themselves bring men farther than the House in which He dwells. *Thy Word*—blazoned in Church and Book—*is a lantern unto my path*; but many see the light who never worship the Light-giver. More is needed. There is a secret

appeal about JESUS, of the heart and not of the mind, that is the final test where He is concerned.

So it is in silence that JESUS always finally, and sometimes altogether, converts. "*Behold!*" cried John, and that sight was all that made the first two disciples follow. JESUS *turned and looked on Peter and*, for no other reason, *he went out and wept bitterly.* Our Lord's silent majesty, white and red, converted the penitent thief. And the silent Victim of the Sacrifice converts more men to-day than books or sermons.

So it was with the much-travelled kings. They had seen many a babe and many a mother; they could not, perhaps, have told you wherein the outward peculiarity of these lay; but heart spoke to heart; something in the simplicity and majesty of these two leapt earthly reasoning; *and when they saw the young Child with Mary His Mother, they fell down and worshipped Him.* Grant to us, Lord, that vision.

For it is one of the mysteries and tragedies of religion that from this test lies no appeal. It perplexes us, at times, why this and that person finds nothing in the Faith, and goes his way unheeding, and we do right, of course, to keep a watchful eye upon our methods and our standards; but something deeper lies behind all these. There are those who look on JESUS and see *no beauty* that they should desire Him. There are some He came *not to call.* In the Gospels we read of

men who actually heard His word and saw His deeds, and then *besought Him to depart out of their coasts.* And the greatest tragedy is that He just went. The scourge of small cords was better than that.

And why all this? I am not sure that I know, but perhaps faith is, after all, God's gift, and there are souls too busy, too self-centred, too clever, too proud, too brave to ask for it. It is in His saddest voice that JESUS says: Si scires donum Dei. . . .

That is why, seeing, we should pray to see.

II

CANDLEMAS

(St. Luke ii. 22–38)

THE amazing thing about the little drama of the Presentation is that neither of the two principal actors in it has the least need for purification. One comes to be purified who has known no other spouse than God the Holy Ghost, the Other to be redeemed who is the author of Redemption. As far as Christ is concerned, the incident is on a parallel with His Baptism. *I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?* cried the burdened John. He is *made obedient to the law for man,* Who Himself was the lawgiver that men might learn obedience to Him.

On the other hand, of those who received the gifts of Mary that day, the priest was probably no better and no worse than those of the *Den of Thieves* with which our Lord dealt so scathingly all His days. Old Simeon was worn out with waiting a weary term of years for one sight of the Saviour to Whom the Virgin Mother had for months been source of life; and as likely as not

Joseph and she were merely two of a little stream of tired peasantry that waited, as in one of our big churches, for their turn. It was the beginning of that dispensation which turns *the world upside down.*

Our thought is led instantly to the sacraments, and pre-eminently to the Sacrament of the Altar. How true it is that JESUS is *the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever*! There cannot surely be one of us who takes part in the adorable sacrifice who does not often marvel at the inversion of things that is there. I should be victim! I should be passive, silent, obedient! I deserve humiliation, insult, forgetfulness! I, in the wonderfully beautiful mediæval language, should be remade who make Him! Who am I to be priest, guardian, minister, arbiter of His mercies, I in whose hands He lies whose garment's fringe I am not worthy to touch! Yet, *in due time*, it was not the ungodly but the Christ who died, and not unfallen angels but men must *shew the Lord's death, till He come.*

Thus, then, does JESUS say daily, *I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you.* Bernard Partridge made an admirable cartoon, but not the Kaiser only need look in wonder and astonishment at the Crucifix. The Cross stands for the great inversion. It is not by insistence on rights, privileges, positions, wisdom, common sense, that the world is won: it is by the sacrifice of these. We have all to learn that.

The difficulty lies in the fact that these things are our rights and privileges undoubtedly. So it was with Christ: *Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye do well, for so I am.* We are, some of us, white men, and lords of Christ's heritage, and people entitled to a certain amount of pleasure and rest, and we must be sensible and keep our supremacy and pass on the culture that the world needs! And some are none of these things, and are not worthy of them, and would not know what to do with them if they had them. Yet it is they we have to save. So St. Peter hated the confession involved in having his feet washed, and that night, in the courtyard of the High Priest's house, even Christ's cleansing seemed to have done him little good.

Now conversion to Christ's point of view entirely depends upon what is one's object. Some French labourers once came to Talleyrand and said, as a final argument, "We must live!" "Really?" said the cynical Minister, "I do not see the necessity!" But in the long-run it was that attitude of the Minister which led the labourers to throw away that which they had counted a necessity. Without that sacrifice their sons had not enjoyed the right to live that their fathers forfeited. Do we value then, living, or Life? our honouring, or Honour? that we be wise, or Wisdom?

Pray God we light our candles bravely at

Candlemas! The candles of the shrine of Mary and her Son do not shine with the light that the men of our time understand, although, as the dumb humble things of this world often try to teach, they burn in sacrifice; but from that shrine, which indeed needs *no candle, neither light of the sun,* streams out *the Light of the World.*

III

PARDON AND PENITENCE

(St. Luke vii. 36–50)

IT has always seemed to me a strange thing that people do not commonly perceive the extraordinary difficulty of our Blessed Lord's teaching about Forgiveness. He always said or did in this regard the least expected thing. There is scarcely an instance to the contrary. So, for example, to the woman taken in adultery, He said, *Neither do I condemn thee,* apparently because every one else was *convicted by their own conscience*—as if two blacks make one white. He talks to that other and possibly worse woman of Samaria, and there is not a word of penitence from beginning to end—only a great deal about thirst. He pleaded for the men who crucified Him for the reason you would think they did not require forgiveness: *they know not what they do.* A parable like that of the Prodigal may seem easy, but there is always the Elder Brother difficulty. One is reminded a little of the Pharisees who *had not had sin* if our Lord had not

come; yet JESUS surely came to *put away sins.* The story of the woman of Simon's house may touch our hearts, but what is the end, if we accept, deliberately, the dictum that much love balances much sin? And in the Model Prayer, the sole plea that we are taught to make for forgiveness is, *for we forgive them that trespass against us.* This, with its parallel passages, is the most startling thing of all.

Now there is a certain simplicity about the Gospels that is a danger; a superficial reader may fail to see the hidden depths. It seems to me to be so here. The more one ponders, the more one wonders. Imagine, for instance, a modern priest in the various situations that befell our Lord. Making every allowance, there is hardly one of us who would do as He did, or say what He said, or let slip the opportunities that He (as we should say) let slip. And if we did as He did and said as He said, I am certain that our world's common sense and decency would be outraged as His was.

It is impossible, here, to elaborate points, but meditation would make plain, I think, that JESUS never meant by forgiveness the little that we mostly mean, and that the penitence which He desires to see in us is one that we all too incompletely visualise.

As JESUS looked at man, He saw that forgiveness was not only His divine act (although of course it was that) but a process which must

proceed within the man himself. As He looked at the Father, He knew that forgiveness was not a change of mind which man had to constrain Him to make, but a perpetual attitude instantly made visible to the penitent who showed the least possibility of true penance. The poor woman, crouching on the ground with no cloak for her sin, was as God would have a penitent be; instantly, therefore, she sees that His Face is Forgiveness, and she must go and work out her salvation. The woman of Samaria showed an unsatisfied, desiring, weary heart, which is what God wants to see in a penitent; instantly, therefore, she sees that His Face is Forgiveness, and she must go and drink deeply of the water that satisfies till she is satisfiable and satisfied. The soldiers knew not what they did, and until a sinner realises a little what he does, he cannot see what is written on the Face of the Father. Of the Prodigal and the Elder Son, the Prodigal saw most of the Father's love because he had come to learn the value of the robe and the ring, and would go on humbly using them as the Elder Brother had never begun to do. The man who forgives his injurer, is the man in whose heart is written deeply the knowledge of his own unworthiness and of his own need. It is he, and he alone, who may perchance be one day satisfied, and in that day he will find he has become changed into the likeness of Christ and made worthy.

There remains the Pharisee. He had seen a vision of God; for him the Old Testament had been lived, and of his race God had taken this and that to prepare a body and to make manifestation. He had both *seen and heard* the works of God the Son. He had seen more, because he had understood more, than either the publicans or the sinners or the disciples. And—and here is the incomprehensible tragedy—he did not want what he saw. He was satisfied with himself; there was no ground for penance in him; and he preferred his rights to their sacrifice, and logic to love. So he chose deliberately what he had never known he had been steadily choosing all along, the very antithesis to God.

O Almighty God, . . . create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, . . . worthily acknowledging our wretchedness, may find of Thee . . . perfect forgiveness, for JESUS *Christ's sake.*

IV

SAINTS PERPETUA, FELICITAS, AND THEIR COMPANIONS

(Hebrews xi. 36–40)

Of whom the world was not worthy—but it was a very worthy world. Its cities were clean and white and well-builded; its roads ran like a die east and west and north and south, and down them tramped the legionaries, and many a provincial, as he heard them go in the dark night, drew closer to the fire and thanked his gods that the days of raid and famine were past and gone. Its law did justice between man and man; its Emperor wrote his Meditations; its wise men had leisure to do wise things; and its solid frontiers, compacted of heroism and self-sacrifice, kept back for many a day the Huns of North and East that Europe was to dread. We have forgotten the glory of Rome; and that for a thousand years after she was really broken and gone, hers was the ideal that illumined like a star the mind of priest and king.

Yet in the blazing sun of a hot afternoon in

the Province of North Africa a brilliant throng looked out at a group which represented to them the most regrettable cause in civilisation. A young wife forgetful of her sex, and deaf to the reasonable entreaty of her father's grey hairs, and a handful of brown-skinned, self-opinionated slaves—fortunately the evil was not yet widespread! The more tender steeled themselves to the spectacle by the remembrance that such impiety and lack of patriotism were a social evil; the more brutal were glad of such excuse; and so it was done. The red blood of SS. Perpetua, Felicitas, and their companions stained the circus gold, and the attendants sanded it quickly over.

The world was not worthy—so thus it signed not Perpetua's but its own doom. That is the irrevocable law. The fittest survives, not always of the individual, but always of the ideal, and of associations that strive for that ideal. The unworthy goes down in the end.

The ships of Tyre, and the carricks of Portugal; the lines of the Pharaohs and of the Zulu kings; the rule of Mahommed and the régime of bullet and whip-lash of the old South African days—where are these? And none were wise in their generation and knew that the doom was on them and their kings.

The world never grows wise; it is only the inevitable law that is wise. There may be causes among us, yes, though they be to-day but voiced

by brown-skinned slaves, of which perhaps we are not worthy. In the bars of Johannesburg, what of the natives in the mines; in the markets of Natal, what of Indian citizenship; in the Synods of the Churches, what of the union of Christ's mystical Body and of the salvation of souls? And not only in these places; louder still and louder, from where the wind is dusting over the new-poured blood on the fields of Flanders and of France, comes the question: What of the honest, and the lovely, and the true? Are ye worthy?

Yet God has provided *some better thing for us.* The harvest is nobler than the seed-sowing. The harvester brings to a crown the labour of the sower. Without the one, the labour of the other would be a poor and wasted thing, but the harvester harvests more manfully if the union between him and the sower be a perfect union, and he be conscious that it was his own seed that was sown. It is for us to prove our union with the Church of St. Perpetua by harvesting what she sowed in our own time and way.

But that is not all, for it is one of the wonders of the universe that God was content to leave the perfecting of His work to men. Even He chose not to be made perfect without us. I can never get out of my head the American story of questioning, wondering Gabriel and of the Son of God. "And if they should get tired, or forget, down there, what then?"

And Jesus made answer: "I've no other plan. *I'm counting on them.*"

Counting on us that the vision be brought to the blind, that the lame in the social march learn to walk, that the world's outcasts are cleansed, that the money-deadened hear, that the dead in lust are raised up, and that the poor have the gospel preached to them! Counting on us that the satisfaction of His travail be full and free! Counting on us that His Kingdom come and His Will be done! And more: Who is it that goes naked and hungry and poor in the person of His little ones, and peers out so eagerly through the prison bars—counting on us?

Who is sufficient for these things? But God hath chosen the weak things of the world, and things which are despised, to bring to nought things that are.

Sancta Perpetua, ora pro nobis.

V

HANDMAID AND MOTHER

(St. Luke i. 26–38)

TRADITIONALLY a garden, a spotless maid, a supernatural visitor, a question concerning the Will of God—and Eve has answered in the negative and is the mother of the Fallen Race. Traditionally a garden, a spotless maid, a supernatural visitor, a question concerning the Will of God—and Mary has answered in the affirmative and is the Mother of the Redeemed. The story of sorrow and ruin and death unfolds from Eve; that of joy and gain and life from Mary. And the turning-point for each is the same: The Will of God.

So it was that when a woman in the crowd, moved by our Lord's words and deeds, cried out that His Mother must be blessed above women, He answered: Yes, but still more blessed *they who hear the Word of God and keep it.* She, therefore, whom the Archangel saluted as Blessed, and who also foretold the fact that all generations should call her Blessed, was more blessed on the

Day of Annunciation than even on the Day of Nativity. The latter saw her the Mother indeed, but the former saw her the Handmaid of the Lord, which is the greater of the two.

We whom the voices of Catholic experience, of Catholic theology, and of Catholic mysticism, assure beyond all question of the pre-eminence and the prerogatives of Saint Mary among the whole company of heaven, should do well to remember this. It may be easier to win souls to her love along the human line that the Son would have His Mother near Him, that she can never be deposed from her rightful relation to His Person, and that they who love the Son will love the Mother also; but this was not the way upon which Christ our Lord laid stress. Her natural Motherhood, indeed, was enough to crown her with the stars, and robe her with the sun, and set the moon beneath her feet; but it is her supreme and unique obedience to the Holy Will of God that has added to her a spiritual Motherhood surpassing even this in glory. The countless thankful hearts, enriched by her ministry of mercy, that call her Blessed, crown her more queenly than the stars.

Consider, then, this Will of God. It is the road to Knowledge; *If any man will do His Will, he shall know of the doctrine.* It is the road to Strength; *My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me.* It is the road to the Joy of Friendship;

Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you. It is the road, also, to a ministry of Service, for he who has the right of entry because of relationship, can alone bid authoritatively to the house. And *He that doeth the Will of My Father, the same is My mother and sister and brother.*

Knowledge, Strength, Joy, Service—all these, then, are at our refusal, for the Will of God demands, chiefly, the response of our own will. Almighty God willingly abdicated His right of compulsion when He made man. Ten thousand countless forms of life move solely and unthinkingly towards one goal at the impulse of His Will, but of man He asks voluntary service. He asks the hardest that He may get the best, and Saint Mary, if no other, proves His wisdom. Alone among created earthly orders, mankind could supply the perfect Mother, because alone it could offer the surrendered will.

This demand of God is what one might have expected of Him: it is such a wise demand. It is at once within the compass of the poorest, and the greatest offering of the most rich. Sanctity does not require any peculiar talent or set of talents, and it does not consist in the attainment, in a sense, of any standard of excellence. We must beware lest we think to attain by imitation of the peculiar graces of some one saint, for in every one the rich Will of God has its own perfect work.

So Julian remained in her anchorage, but not in seclusion would Catherine of Siena, who guided kings, have found her perfection; so the Curé d'Ars remained in his parish, but not in any one parish would Francis Xavier have reached his crown. I am to practise the presence of God, but not the cooking of Brother Laurence, and no more of necessity the poverty of Francis of Assisi, although I am to surrender all to God. There is no common manifestation of the working of the Will of God; yet all the saints have that in common which bids the Church Universal, in heaven and in earth, name the Handmaid "Mother."

And the very universality of that Motherhood bids us remember that this demand of God is a universal demand. *Be ye perfect as I am perfect*, said JESUS. We are all *called to be saints*. We do right to differentiate those who so splendidly overcome on earth; but nothing less than the perfect can enter heaven. So that completes the circle. If I but will to deepen my longing for the vision of His love, I set out upon the pathway of the Handmaid of the Lord.

VI

THE FULFILMENT OF THE PASSOVER

(St. Luke xxii. 14–21)

WITH desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. So our Lord had been looking forward to, and planning for, that wonderful Maundy Thursday, for who dare say how long? The beginning of the end, the end of the beginning, it was both these things; but it was more, it was the beginning of that which is to have no end. *For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it* (the Passover) *be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. And of His Kingdom there shall be no end.* It was for this reason, then, that He most welcomed it. It was the night of the Bridegroom before the Feast. It was the night for which God had planned since out of Egypt He had first called His Son. It was the last night of the "straitening" of Him Who was thereafter to know no earthly restriction to the passion of His love.

He was therein to fulfil the type of the Passover. His new Israel was to be stained with the

new Blood of the new Lamb for its passage out of servitude into *the glorious liberty of the children of God.* Moreover, the Passover was thus to be *fulfilled in the Kingdom of God,* fulfilled, that is, in that Kingdom that knows no bound of time or place or colour. It was to be fulfilled *once for all,* that that new Blood-marking might be available for every day of man's need. It was to be fulfilled that every land might find the Token of Salvation wherever altar might be set up. It was to be fulfilled, widened, enriched, deepened, that henceforth there should be about that Table *neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free,* but Christ's, *and heirs according to the promise.*

Now, this was the great *desire* of our Lord. It is another illustration of the fact that, to our Lord, the earthly ministry in Palestine was but the necessary stage upon which might be set in order His preparations for a world-wide ministry. He conceived of no act of His, done there, as complete in itself, except in so far as it was the complete and perfect initiation of His further plans. Thus the greatest of all His acts, and in some sense the sum of them all, the making possible, that is, of reconciliation between God and man, was not so much completed in Palestine, as commenced. The steps necessary for the working out of such reconciliation were completed, but the reconciliation itself needed not the straitened life of the Man of Sorrows, but the resurrection

life of the Son of God. It was that era of the Kingdom, in which He, the King, would know no bound to His saving power, for which He passionately longed.

The Eucharist was His own divine plan for the processes of world-wide reconciliation. Here, He was to be eternally *lifted up*, to draw all men to Him; here, His death was to be continually observed as the sacrifice of redemption; here, sinners were to be made one with Him, to find, that is, the single method of atonement by which man can come back to God. And in its nature the Eucharist could be limited only by that which God permits to limit Him perpetually, man's own free will. Should the members of His Church but make that surrender of their wills to Him, then there would never be lack of a priesthood, nor fortress unstormed by the soldiers of God.

Thus we should set ourselves to ask how far that fulfilled Passover of the Eucharist finds fulfilment in ourselves. The Passover is indeed fulfilled, but do we enter into such a sense of what that fulfilment means that we are worthy to drink of His cup?

Consider three types from among those who sat with Him that first night. There was St. John, close on the Master's breast. He figures so comparatively little in the rest of the story that it is only his own writings which show how clearly he entered into the Fulfilment. He alone of the

Twelve could brave, and could endure, St. Mary's own station by the Cross. He alone seems not to have expected a rifled tomb, and it was he who found the traces of that noble, unhurried, resistless resurrection. So it is he whose Gospel and Epistles are stamped with the certainty of what the Fulfilment means. He knew no half-beliefs; his words are as incisive as those of his Master. It is from them that the Church draws her creeds. It is in them that she finds her great incentive for her primary work of foreign missions.

There was St. Peter. How much has been written of him!—the so-human apostle, type of the majority of us, but pre-eminent example of the triumph of grace. True, God used him as He used no other, perhaps could so use him just because he was so human; but it was a battle all along. From the washing of the feet until the turning back on the Flaminian Way that eve of martyrdom, St. Peter was always finding the conception of Fulfilment hard. Yet, step by step, sometimes stumbling but always advancing again, he came into it. In the end his stone of the Twelve Foundations was of the texture of the very Wall itself, and its light that of the City *having the glory of God* (Rev. xxi., vers. 14, 19, 18, 11).

And there was Judas. There is no need to speculate as to the wherefore of his fall: it is written as plainly as can be. He alone who gathered

round the board of Fulfilment entered not at all into the appreciation of what that Fulfilment meant. Yet he was there. That is the solemn fact. Such is the wonder of God's humility that it is possible for a traitor's hand to be with Him on the Table.

Therefore I ask myself, as I think of the mornings when I too take my place at the Table of Fulfilment, how far do I understand, with John; how far do I strive to understand, with Peter; or how far do I fail to understand, with Iscariot?

VII

THE HIDDEN WITNESS

(1 St. John v. 9–13)

He is risen! Well, if He is, the thing will prove itself: that is the point that every Christian soul ought to make. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself,* says St. John, and it is one of those sayings of his that is manifestly plain, one of the many that shoot across the night of our childish bewilderment like the dazzling gleam of the search-light. It is amazing that we ever forget it, but how many of us do! We have all of us, to some degree, got into the habit of treating religion as a thing apart, as a thing removed from the standards and logic of everyday life, and consequently as something artificial. Well, there are religions that have to be treated so, but the necessity for such treatment is the sure test of a false religion.

The fact, then, is, that Jesus Christ *being alive for evermore,* my soul will know it within herself, in addition to Biblical, or historical, or philosophical proofs. *Come unto Me and I will give you rest—*

well, if He is alive, I can come and find rest. *Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*—well, if He is alive, I shall be able then to find Him. *He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him, and he shall live by Me*—well, if He is alive, there is new life for my soul. It is so elementary, and so forgotten. If Matthew Arnold's Syrian Grave and Dust were thought to be found to-morrow, it could make no difference. The truth of the risen Saviour does not rest on archæology.

It is worth remarking, by the way, that neglect of this elementary fact about the Christian religion is responsible for the greater part of modern unbelief. Nowadays there happens to be a Science of Psychology, but nine out of ten people do not seem to realise it. But the fact is that no modern scientist of position dreams of disputing that Psychology is as real a thing as, let us say, Inorganic Chemistry, and the greater number of men who count are beginning seriously to ask if it is not very considerably more important. In short, it is admitted that the fact that I have what we agree to call a soul is as important and as real as that I have a body, and consequently the spiritual senses are as good evidence of value as the physical. That a man loves is as true as that he smells or touches or hears or sees; and as a matter of experience, it is the first fact and not the second series of facts

that has dictated the course of the world's history. Moreover—and this is the great point—most of the world's tragedies have come about because politicians or rulers have commonly denied the first since it cannot be proved by the same canons as the second. "Why should they love?"—liberty, faith, a lost cause, whatever it may be; "There is nothing therein to appeal to their senses"; "They do not love"; "Let us act as if they do not love"—that is the series of propositions which, acted upon by those in authority, led men finally to set the Cross above the Eagle, to dethrone the Kings of France, and to liberate the slave—to take but three illustrations.

All this is of genuine importance in Eastertime. There are tens of thousands who demand of Christ that He convince their senses, and who reject Him because, very truly, His Kingdom is *not of this world* of sense. Mr. Blatchford, for example, sets a modern Christian in the witness-box, and rejects his evidence because he cannot produce the signatures of the Apostles. It would be foolish if it were not a matter of life and death. It is as foolish, to take an illustration from the sermons of a late world-renowned preacher, as if a man refused to believe in the beauty of a picture because it did not taste sweet, or the music of a violin because it did not smell. The things of the spirit are to be spiritually discerned. But this is why the Way is narrow:

Ye search the Scripture, but ye will not come to Me that ye may have life. Men are too proud to bow their heads to the tests of Faith. Only in the last resource, when broken-hearted, or dying, or up against the shock of ideals in unquestioned conflict, will they heed.

The shock of ideals in unquestioned conflict—that is what we Christians ought to be showing the world, and what we do not show. Here, too, is the greatest of all such conflicts, the belief in the risen JESUS overruling every single dictate that the world accepts. Nero's palace garden was one such battlefield; France, when the Anti-clerical laws left the Church utterly ruined and contemned just before the War, was another; and there is that in the British Empire which would make it as good a field as either of these. But can we say the battle is set?

And why not? Every Sunday is a commemoration of Easter. The Sunday Eucharist is the time to question the soul as to how far the voice of the living JESUS rings through the silence of the tomb, as to how far the glory of the Face of JESUS shines through the fog and the gloom. In His Sacramental Presence, ask yourself, What is He to me? Let it be in a time of silence; let it be when honest recognition is given to the demands of the soul for expression—in effort, in fasting, in prayer; and let it be while the wondrous story of His claim to offer realities surpassing those of

earth and the body, rings fresh in the ears. Then will there be only one answer. *I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ* JESUS *my Lord. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ* JESUS.

VIII

THE INVENTION OF THE HOLY CROSS

(St. Matthew xvi. 21–28)

THE story of the Finding of the Cross is a great subject for mystical meditation, which is a thing we do far too little. The early Church delighted in it. There is a certain artlessness about, for example, the mystic parallels which Rufinus finds in the Old Testament when he writes about the Creed; and it is like our practical foolishness that we rarely discern the love behind them that is their beauty. Also such mysticism has a value all its own. It makes windows for the inner light to flood the soul.

So, first, I notice in this connection the significant fact that the Cross can be lost. Christianity was to consist chiefly in the finding of the Cross; but our religious history has become very largely the story of the losing of it. Christ's religion began by being the consummation of a personal union with Him in the Apostolic Fellowship which was His own true Body at work in the world; it has very often become a system of ethics, or a logical

proposition, or an artistic dream. There are some who would say, "Yes, and a Creed too, which it was never meant to be"; but I notice that such voices come from those who have themselves lost those songs of passionate triumph which afford us such expression for our love. Yet whose is the blame? We ourselves have too often lost the Cross from the Creed, and the Creed is singularly un-Christian then.

For, secondly, what does the Cross mean? The Cross was the world's rejection of the claim of Christ; yes, it was the world's futile antithesis to the gospel that He preached. It was its final foolishness. "You teach a gospel that would rob us of our pleasure and our gain and our reality: very well, now for the nails and the lance! Are they unreal? If you despise our pleasure and our profit, can you despise our pain?" The world's voice rang triumphant, but its echo died out in amaze! The answer of Christ and His martyrs was its final disillusionment: "I can!" That is, at least, how I understand the Crucifixion, and the defeat of Cæsar.

In one way, therefore, our Blessed Lord did not seek the Cross, but that which the Son of God had ever known, grew, within the human limitations of the Son of Man to a sense that the World could not be convinced without the Cross, and that the malice of sin had made the world's nature so antithetical to the Gospel that the Cross

would become inevitable to any follower of the Gospel. It is like that other grim necessity. A man thinks Hell impossible until he realises that the malice of sin is so great that it can set a man's will in infinite antagonism to God. That malice makes possible an "eternal sin" (Mark iii. 29, R.V.); it also makes the Cross essential, until earth pass away.

Thirdly, then, I see now how the Church in any age can come to lose sight of the Cross: it can think the world conquered, or it can think it knows a better way to conquer. The first is the common historical explanation of much that happened after the battle of Saxa Rubra and the Edict of Milan, but it is at least as good an explanation of much in Christendom to-day. We think the world conquered. In a broad tolerance we do not insist upon that which we ourselves believe, in faith and practice, because we feel convinced that the other man is a true Christian enough though he does not think with us. The Reformation made that sort of tolerance seem inevitable, and it is worth considering that, curiously enough, it is since then that the Cross has largely disappeared from Christendom.

Or, again, we refuse to believe the evidence of our eyes and ears in politics and social conditions. It is axiomatic with us that Christ has conquered the world, and when we find

that He has no place in Parliament Houses, or on Boards of Directors, we can hardly bring ourselves to believe that nothing short of conquest has to be begun again, and to be undertaken with so bloody a weapon as the Cross. And we hesitate, too, for another reason. It is essential to the warfare of Christ that not the blood of His enemies, but our own, should stain that weapon.

Then the Church often lets the Cross drop out of sight because it thinks it knows a better way to conquer. That, also, is often the explanation given of much in the Church of the early centuries: that it preferred adaptation and compromise to crucifixion. Some rude pagan image would be painted anew for a figure of the Blessed Mother; maybe, and would to God, our compromises stopped at the painting of images! It is so hard to draw the line, we say. I wonder if it is? It is remarkably hard to draw the line when you want to win the battle without the Cross, but if the Cross is easily lost, it is still more easily found. It lies right in the road of every soul that goes out honestly to seek it.

May 3rd is the Feast of the Finding of the Cross, and our brethren in the Roman Catholic Church have another Feast on May 4th. It is that of the English Martyrs. I confess that I wish we kept that Feast too, perhaps with a wider

significance, for Ridley and Laud as well as for Fisher and More. At least they all sought and found the Cross. And one thing I know: the martyrology of England will begin to grow again when Englishmen begin again to seek it.

IX

THE EXPEDIENT ASCENSION

(St. John xvi. 5-7, 13-22)

THE thoughts of children are often more valuable than we are inclined to believe, for a child, although his thinking may be superficial, thinks what he does think without prejudice to the host of conventions that make it hard for many of us to think at all—especially in religion. And there is a child's thought about the Ascension that it would do us good to consider more often than we do.

"*It is expedient for you that I go away.*" "But what did our Lord mean by that?" says the child I know. "I would much rather have Him on earth. Things would be so much more *real* if He were on earth, and I might even understand the Bible if He were here to explain it. And grown-ups think so! They wrote the hymn which says:

I think, when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children as lambs to His fold;
I should like to have been with Him then!

I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said:
'Let the little ones come unto Me'!

No, I don't think it was expedient for Him to go away! I wish He were here now."

Now what is our honest reply to that? I confess that for years I personally knew that I had none. I said to myself that the conditions of the earth-life of the Son of Mary could not have continued for ever, and that if they had I should never probably have been able to visit Him in Palestine; and I said that His spiritual Presence was as real as His physical, and better for us, since it knew no limitation of time or space. But that was pure convention. Underneath, all the time, ran the child's wistful refrain: "I should like to have been with Him then." *I* should like. Surely, said my rebellious heart, it were happier for me individually. The Master therefore never used these words of His to me. They were a part of the Holy Scriptures from which I drew no help. Joy at the real vision of Him was something I hoped from the future. But then came the slow dawning of what He meant, and with it the dawning of a greater joy than I had thought possible. I went about almost bewildered by the vision. Can it be true? I said; can it be really true? and then the certainty that this and this alone could explain

His words; that thus, and thus alone, could His promises ring true; that the proof lay in the very fact that such an explanation alone met my heart's need—these things swept the barriers away. I echoed the words of St. Thomas; David's song became mine for Ascension Day:

> God is gone up with a merry noise;
> And the Lord with the sound of the trump.
> O sing praises, sing praises unto our God:
> Sing ye praises with understanding.

The steps to right faith in the Ascension are, I think, these:

(1) A sense that Ascension does not stand for withdrawal. I had always thought that it did. I thought He had ascended up into heaven and thereby left the earth; and no wonder I thought so. The voice of the Church was silent in my part of the world, and it had never explained what it meant by the use of Ptolemaic cosmology. But St. Paul gave me the clue. "*Into the heavenlies*" was what he was always saying, not into heaven. What JESUS did, then, was not so much to change His place as to change His mode of existence. He lived before in the earthlies; He lives now "in the heavenlies"—that is all. And yet I was not very much happier. True, at times the veil between that land and this is thin, but perhaps when it is thinnest one realises that it is all but impenetrable—from this side.

So it was that (2) I experienced a real revo-

lution in thought when it dawned on me that JESUS Himself had made a plan for the continual penetration of that invisible curtain, so thin and yet so strong. There were places where those worlds met—seven places. The Sacraments! I had always thought them occasional means of grace comparable to, and perhaps a little greater—but for all that much less frequently used—than prayer and Bible-reading.

Now I saw that they were unique; that they were the modes of the expression of His activity still upon earth. It was my own fault if I did not, for example, daily touch my Lord.

And then (3) the vision of that of which the Sacraments were the activities began to dawn. Christ had ascended up into heaven only that He might begin to live in a new body of power and might, His own Fulness. The Church and He had been always two distinct entities in my mind, and the Church had meant little more than the Church of England. What if it was something infinitely greater? What if the persistence of the Faith, despite opposition and apparent defeat, spelt the *sign of the prophet Jonas*? What if the Church were something more than the aggregate of its members, something with a living Mind that planned and thought and willed—so that the members were swept along by it? What if there might be a truce of all these hopeless academic speculations as to what was done in 300 A.D. or

what the Reformers meant twelve hundred years later? What if the experience of the Saints in every century pointed to a living JESUS ascended into His mystical Body of the Catholic Church, teaching me through that Body, bearing me, leading me, assuring me? Could so golden a vision have substance on earth? "Tolle! Lege!" And the Book spoke:

Ye are come unto the City . . . the Church . . .
JESUS.

I read once, I think of St. Catherine of Genoa, that when some one questioned her about the Faith she could hardly reply for laughter and tears. And the questioner was a little scandalised, and asked why? "Oh," she said (or words to this effect), "it is so wonderful, so lovely, and so plain. I must needs laugh, for the voice of my Lord is music; and weep, for my ears are not fit to hear."

It is expedient for you that I go away. "I must needs laugh, for the voice of my Lord is music; and weep, for my ears are not fit to hear."

X

THE COMFORTER

(ROMANS vii. and viii.)

IT is perhaps hardly to be denied that comfort is not the first thought with which we associate the office of the Holy Spirit, and yet "The Comforter" seems to have been our Lord's favourite term for Him. Incidentally this is a proof of what we were thinking in our last chapter. Within the Catholic Church dwells the ascended JESUS, and there He may be found and loved this day. But the Holy Ghost is the means whereby the Church is knit into one Body for this great office. Just as JESUS was conceived by the Holy Ghost for His birth of the Virgin Mary, so the Holy Ghost is the Agent whereby our Lord entered, and dwells in, His new Body of the Catholic Church. That Spirit, then, Who first gave us our Lord and to Whom we owe His continual Presence, is indeed our Comforter. But for His aid, we had been without Christ in the world.

It is interesting to see how this is brought

out in the Acts of the Apostles. JESUS Christ ascends into heaven, and His going leaves the disciples fearful and lonely. They go back to Jerusalem and lock all the doors. Then at Pentecost, signed by the rocking of the house, and the fire and the wind, that Divine Spirit comes of whom they have been advertised. Instantly they are changed. They go out to witness, burning words on their tongues, power in their hands, joy on their faces. And when the people question them, when they gaze with awe on their faces, what is the secret that those apostles confess? *By the name of* JESUS *doth this man stand before you whole.* And people *took knowledge of them that they had been with* JESUS. The coming of the Spirit brought JESUS back to them. Well then was He named the Comforter!

They were beautiful words, then, of our Lord: *Howbeit, when He the Spirit of Truth is come . . . He shall not speak Himself . . . He shall glorify Me,* and they were literally fulfilled. The Book of the Acts has been called the Acts of the Holy Ghost, but if so, nothing could show more plainly the relation of those two Divine Persons. At every turn we read, *full of the Holy Ghost,* or *by the Spirit,* or *the Holy Ghost fell on them,* but always as a kind of interjection; the end of the story is, *I see . . . the Son of Man,* or *Preached unto him* JESUS, or *Then remembered I the word of the Lord.* The Spirit never speaks of Himself. He

always points to JESUS. It is extraordinarily beautiful.

Now the reverse of the picture is shown us in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. There it is not so much "in the Spirit—JESUS," but "in Christ JESUS—the Spirit." *In Christ* JESUS, *the Spirit hath made me free, shall quicken your mortal bodies, helpeth our infirmities*, and so on. It is all one picture. The Holy Spirit descends on the Body, and it becomes at once instinct with the life and power of JESUS. It is *His fulness.* Therefore in Him—in, that is to say, the Body which is He—the individual finds himself under the control of the Divine Spirit. And *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.*

The seventh chapter of St. Paul's epistle, then, puts finely the conflict that arises in the individual soul. Any one of us outside the Church is under a hard law. The Law of God, the natural law, holds true; excess shall be punished: *Thou shalt not covet.* But ah! how we covet! The very thing that we know is against the Law, that we wish to do. You can see it in heathenism every day, and there is small hope of escape for the heathen man. But we enter the Body of Christ. Instantly *by the Body of Christ* we become dead to the Law—freed from it—that we *should be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead.* Henceforth a new spirit

enters into us, the Spirit of the Body of JESUS. Given full control, that Spirit will supersede our old passions, and become a new passion for righteousness—such as we see in the lives of the saints, and such as men saw in the Son of Mary. We are dead then to the Law. The old *Thou shalt not* does not matter to us: we do not want the thing it forbids. *Thou shalt* alone matters to us now—*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.*

And yet, even to a St. Paul, *what I hate, that I do. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another, warring, and bringing me into captivity. . . .*

Now what is the escape from this? Unquestionably, humanly speaking, it is for the soul to assert the truth of Rom. vii. 17: *It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.* People are sometimes frightened of that text, and indeed it has led to the excesses of Antinomianism in the history of the Church. But every truth has been abused, and the remedy does not lie in forgetting the truth. And the truth is that the devil will blind our eyes to the fact—the solid, unalterable fact, which, acted upon, means life—the fact, that is, that the Holy Spirit is within us, and that we have an inner man who does delight in the Law of God. Baptism is not for nothing. There is an inner man, perhaps the subconscious self of the Psychologists, in every

Christian that is "born again" *after the Spirit.* Satan will try to din into our outward ears that our very true self is not there at all; but it is one of his lies, and the first step to conquest is to nail it—well, in this case, to the Cross.

Here, then, is a spiritual exercise for the heavy-laden. Go into church, and kneel down, and read over Rom. viii. 35–39, and ask yourself if that is not, at deep bottom, the cry of your own heart. And then get up and praise God the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

XI

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

(St. Matthew xi. 28–30)

CORPUS CHRISTI and the Feast of the Sacred Heart, these are both commemorations that are finding increasing recognition among ourselves. I do not know if there were any deliberate intention in the placing of them so close together, but if so, it was well done. Only a Heart so loving and so tender as that of Jesus Christ could have devised that adorable mystery of love and tenderness that we call the Blessed Sacrament.

"*I am meek and lowly of Heart*—true, most lowly Jesus, for Thou wouldest not otherwise condescend to the Sacrament of the Altar. Thou wouldest not otherwise suffer it to be possible still for men to mishandle Thee, knowing not what they do, or for men to reject Thee, because Thou art not what they expect Thee to be. Nor wouldest Thou otherwise care enough for me as to enter daily a place more unfitted for Thee than even Bethlehem's stable."

But let us think more particularly of the latter

Feast. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a thing we little understand for the most part, and the majority of us are offended by the images and pictures that piety makes to express this devotion. Off-hand, English Churchmen are inclined to say that it is Roman Catholic, and to let it go at that.

Now if one could only consider it quietly, this indicates a singular frame of mind. In the first place, I notice that it is a frame of mind peculiarly remote from that of early Christendom. True, devotion to the Sacred Heart may be a "late" cult—as late as the Reformation, but before that there was an equally tender devotion to the Five Wounds, or the Sacred Face, or the Infant JESUS. Moreover, there is a great deal more about the Sacred Heart in mediæval devotion than one might perhaps expect to find.

Secondly, I notice that it is a peculiarly overbearing frame of mind. There is no sort of question that Our Lord had a human Heart that was pierced by love and anguish (and not only on Calvary), and even the Black Rubric assures us that that Heart is in heaven. Moreover, He Himself condescended to the colloquialism of such phraseology as "a tender heart"; and therefore it is wrong that we should be discontented with those who still find help in such language, and also are inclined to picture a profoundly real spiritual fact in a (to us) almost absurd image.

I venture to think, then, that it all points to a

salient fact about our Church life as a whole, which is this, that we have lost a simple faith, or better still, faith and simplicity.

Faith. The secret of devotion to the physical person of JESUS is nothing but this. The Englishman is the tenderest person in the world to physical pain in others, and he is just as shameless about it in the trenches as the Frenchman. But the physical pain of JESUS Christ leaves him untouched to an extraordinary degree. But it leaves him not quite unmoved either. A priest friend of mine writes of taking a party of Tommies to see a strangely-preserved and lifelike crucifix in a Belgian ruined church. The men, he said, stood about and looked uncomfortable. The moment they were outside they were overwhelmingly merry, and every one of the party, he added, had been to him secretly since, for a talk about it. Why? I think it is difficult to escape from the conclusion—our Saviour is not quite real to them; but what I feel so much is that He is not quite real to so many of us. That wounded Heart! In truth, in literal, actual fact, it beat so slowly down the Via Dolorosa; it throbbed, it anguished, as they nailed Him to the Tree; it was pierced by the lance for me. The image is crude? Maybe, but it is not for me to say so who know that it is as true a picture as can be made of what took place—for me.

Simplicity. "Of what took place," I wrote,

But is it past? The actual Cross and Spear, yes, but the anguish of that Sacred Heart, is it past? This is where simplicity comes in. "He ascended into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." True, infinitely true, but your little child knows more. "Yes, but, Mummy, He's just the same, isn't He, underneath the Crown and all the Angels?" so I heard that a little child put it. And yet we teach children to say, "Pity my simplicity"! It is not the child, surely, that the Father pities! Francis Thompson expressed better what the Father thinks, in his prayer about the Infant JESUS:

> And He will smile that children's tongue
> Has not changed since Thou wast young!

No. There is a story of Coulson Kernahan somewhere in which the world is surprised to find that God on His Throne was not the remote and unmoved Potentate they had imagined. But I cannot understand how the worshippers of JESUS should be so surprised. *I know in Whom I have believed.* I know that every sin of mine is as another stab into that Sacred Heart. I know that every joy of mine brings a smile to that Sacred Face. I know that every ambition of mine is to tell the love and minister the Blood that wells, drop by drop, from that Sacred Heart.

And I know that I am very tender with those poor images. Child of mine should love one, and I wish I too were more of a child.

But what about Theology? Well, in its youth, Catholic Theology learned not to try to pour the sea into a child's hole in the sand. As it grew a bit older, it found that it had a great deal to learn from devotion. Somewhere about middle age, it discovered the danger of attempting to define too closely the mysteries of God. And so to-day it does its honest duty when, on the one hand, it insists that I recite my three Creeds with singleness of mind, and on the other, permits me to love, very tenderly, the sacred Heart of JESUS.

XII

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL

"Let us set before our eyes the good Apostles, the greatest and most righteous pillars of the Church."—St. Clement of Rome.

(St. Luke ix. 23-25)

I WANT to make a personal confession about this chapter, for it has been suggested to me in a way that would scarcely have been possible before the War. And the way was as follows:

I sat down at my desk, pen in hand, and as I did so glanced at the Kalendar before me. June 29, it read, the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. So I said to myself with confidence that I would write about those Saints. I headed a paper with St. Clement's words at once, and then I sat back for an inspiration. But an inspiration would not come. My thought wandered off in one direction, it is true, but it did not seem satisfactory. And so I waited an hour or more.

Then my normal work claimed me: it was time to start on a week's round of out-station visiting. As I often do, I wrapped up my bread and cheese (to be absolutely honest) in copies of

the *Literary Supplement* of *The Times*, which is admirable and condensed reading on the out-stations. And so it came about that that night my meditation on Peter and Paul was supplied.

I found myself with the issue of the 28th of December, and with a leader headed "A National Lent." And as I read, I wondered, until in the end I put it down, to thank God that such a leader in such a paper should have become possible.

The writer began by pointing out that nothing is stranger in the nature of men than their willingness to sacrifice their lives compared with their unwillingness to sacrifice other things. A father will heroically give up his son, but he finds it all but impossible to give up his whisky. It is harder for the nation to give up its luxuries, indulgencies, elegancies, than it is for it to give up 5,000,000 of its men. And the reason is that it is easier to make one great act of renunciation—like a soldier, like a monk—and step out into the new life, than it is to renounce day by day our whole world of conventionalities.

But the writer goes on to show that a second difficulty in such sacrifice is that we do not want to renounce our conventionalities, we do not want our freedom. "Lights and wine, furs and silks, ease and swiftness of travel, the quiet deference paid to the rich everywhere; the gloss, the high

finish and delicacy of all our possessions, the smoothness and precision and spaciousness of our homes: all these things make a heaven of this world." And freedom means "discomfort in a world where men aim at comfort above all things; it means oddity where they made it a point of honour not to be odd; it looks like a proof of worldly failure where they long for the praise of worldly success." And so we had quieted our instincts and deadened our souls until we had grown so used to the old life that "we did not know it had to be paid for."

Well, we know now that it has to be paid for. And why?—because we realise the unity of the nation. We used, for example, to defend our luxuries on the ground that they gave employment; but the nation cannot now afford that labour. Every individual has got to standardise himself and the nation; and—my writer quotes a British Minister—"It is not what a nation gains, it is what a nation gives that makes it great."

Every individual, too, has to ask what was the honour and the glory of the nation in the past, and what it will be in the future. And Past and Future are seen to mean not "that warm, well-finished life of worldly success, but the labour and sweat of great deeds, and the solitary passion of great thoughts; not pleasure, but the high quality of joy or of sorrow; not

prettiness, but the fierce austerity of beauty; not the palaces, but the cottages and village churches of the past."

"And they mean more of all these things to be, when we have leisure to make our purged country worthy of all those who died for it."

So, says my writer, the great lesson is that "only through austerity can men come to joy and beauty." We had forgotten that. "Austerity meant nothing to us except the lack of that which we wanted; and we wanted all we could get." "The world of the rich (before the War) became more and more one huge ugly toyshop and nursery, littered with novel trash that quickly lost its novelty; and for the poor there were only imitations of that trash, uglier still."

"So"—and this is how he concludes—"think what Christmas meant to us before the War. It meant shops crowded and houses littered with glittering trash that we bought and gave to each other as if we were hypnotised. No one wished to buy it, and no one wished to make it; yet it was bought as mechanically as it was made. Think of our restaurant dinners with their noisy bands; and then think of the first Christmas: the shepherds startled by music in the night, the Wise Men travelling far, and the birth that was to change the world among the beasts in the stable. There was a deeper unfaith in our

manner of celebrating that than any disbelief in the story.

"We had forgotten what the story meant, forgotten the humble piercing beauty of it and the truth that all beauty which pierces to the heart is born in humility. Our ignorant forefathers knew that well enough and had the secret of that beauty; they lacked our science and all the trash it gives us, but they had the science to build the churches like heaven and to make hymns that angels might sing.

"We have lost the power of making songs like that—we do not even sing them; and we shall not recover the power except through austerity—not for the sake of winning the War, but for the sake of brotherhood, that there may be no more leading into captivity in our streets; for the sake of beauty, that it may be shared and understood of all; for the sake of God, that we may no no longer hide the light of His countenance from us."

Do you wonder that when I read that, in my rondhavel on a slope of the Malutis by the light of a candle in an old sardine tin, I wondered? It was the exact answer to my musings over the day of Saints Peter and Paul. Why is it, I had been asking myself, that their very names conjure up a vision of a kind of fabulous age of Faith? They taught "righteousness unto the whole

world"; they turned it upside down; their heroism, their valour, their love glow like a glory in the Past. But why in the Past? Why not such saintship now? The same Lord, the same faith, and after all very much the same world, but why not the same enthusiasm and heroic joy? What is the matter with us all that Peter and Paul should seem a golden dream?

And I got my answer. Freedom for saintship like that means "oddity where they make it a point of honour not to be odd"—how the words bite in! It means not an individual love of that "warm well-finished life of worldly success," but "the labour and sweat of great deeds and the solitary passion of great thoughts"—how cruelly true the indictment is! And "power through austerity," not for the sake of winning the War, but "for the sake of brotherhood and for the sake of God"—that is the secret of Peter and Paul and of those grand days of Rome. And it is the *Literary Times* that preaches the sermon to a congregation of 50,000 subscribers with the words of Mr. Lloyd George for its text.

But how is it that it is so! The Church in England has preached Lent for 1500 years, but it takes a Chancellor of the Exchequer to institute it. *He that findeth his life shall lose it; he that loseth his life shall find it.*—"It is not what a nation gains, it is what a nation gives, that makes it great." What are these but the same words?

but it is Mr. Lloyd George and not the Lord JESUS Christ who moves the press to quotation. And it is the battle of the Kaiser and not the battle of the Lord that calls men to such apostleship to-day. Not quite true? Maybe not, but there is enough of truth in it to urge on us the advice of Clement of which I thought before I up-saddled for the Malutis.

XIII

THE RELIGION OF COMMON THINGS

(St. Matthew vi. 26–34)

THE Christian Year falls into two clear halves—as I suppose most preachers know acutely—Advent to Trinity, and the long Trinity season. The first offers us a round of feasts presenting the dogmas of the Faith; the second is, on the whole, a rather colourless half-year of which one tends to get a little tired. And yet it is not colourless, for the Church wears green—an interesting symbol. I am not sure that green is not more significant than even the martyr's royal red, or flaming white and gold, or the Church's own majestic purple, for it stands for the common things. It is the basal colour of the mantle that God wears in this world—that and blue, which is another story, perhaps not so fanciful as one might think either. But let us consider green, the colour of common things.

Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of common things, the religion of everyday life, and it loses its power and its glory the moment that that is

forgotten. Treat religion as one only of the many activities of life; regard the holy day of religion as exclusively Sunday; magnify the festivals and forget the daily sacrifice; and *Religion* becomes *a religion.* And I very much doubt if *a religion* is worth having at all.

To begin with, this transmutation of the value of common things was the unique characteristic of the Christianity of the first centuries. The Sermon on the Mount is sometimes spoken of as if it were startling because preached as an attack on sacramental religion, but it can only be so regarded if it is lifted clean out of its own atmosphere. The Jew, to whom it was preached, was a sacramentalist if ever there was one, and so were the early Christians, with their daily Breaking of the Bread, their insistence on Baptism and the Laying on of Hands, their use of what were perilously near relics (Acts xix. 12), and their manifold signing with the Cross (Tertullian); but the Jew had forgotten the common things—God's Fatherhood, Man's Brotherhood, and the religion of common sense. It was these that the Sermon on the Mount insisted upon, and it was the practical acceptance of the Sermon on the Mount that was the strength of early Christianity.

It was for this reason that the Roman world found it so impossible to understand the Christian and the Christian martyr—and there were few of the first that were not of the second. The world

was too complex to understand the simplicity of Christianity. The man who was content with *the vocation wherein he was called*, and therein *abode with God*; the man who took no particularly *anxious thought* even when the next day might bring him to Nero's palace gardens; the man who frankly flung away the earth because he considered it unreal by the side of heaven; and still more the man—or it might be the girl in her teens—who could see nothing but the simplest possible course of conduct when those little difficulties of life arose which are caused by the clashing of the laws of God and the conventions of men; such a man was more than the world could understand. He was too simple to understand its wisdom, and it was too wise to understand his simplicity. The Christian was like the Boy JESUS in the Temple, and the world was like the circle of old men. JESUS had been too artless for them. *The Father's Home*—it was the last thing in the world that they would have called the Temple, and it was the one title that settled absolutely what you were to do both inside and out of it.

So *the world hated Him*, and them too. But it does not hate us much, for we have got mixed up with its own old round of complications and we fuss about happily together! It works out in everything.

Suppose, for example, we just went back simply to that Apostolic daily *Breaking of Bread*, what

a splendid beginning that would be! And why not? Awkward breakfast hours, trouble with servants, a High Church custom—there you are at once! But is *the life more than meat*, or not? And what does it matter whose a custom is if it is good? And is there any one who would not admit that if the vast majority of Church people started to make a daily practice of that half-hour with the risen Lord in our neglected churches, it would simply and absolutely revolutionise ourselves and our world?

Ought one to call that Service a "common thing"? One finds oneself asking that, which exactly proves how far we have wandered away from what the Church meant by the use of green! Of course it is meant to be a "common thing" to the Christian, and with it every other practice of our holy religion—as common as eating and drinking and dressing and working and loving. For it was precisely these which were lifted up to, and meant to be lived upon, the heavenly level by the Sermon on the Mount, and these, transfigured, are Christianity. *Consider the lilies—the sparrows.* . . . Glory in the green!

XIV

THE PATIENCE OF GOD

(Psalm xxiii.)

THREE of the most curious of the Old Testament books are Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, yet these three do more to bring before our minds the essential value of the Old Testament than even those lessons from the Kings and Chronicles that are so often attacked in these days. That an early and probably polytheistic drama, a collection of extremely human and cynical saws, and a writing that is, at the best, a page of hard philosophy bred of the fatalistic East, should still find a place in the joyous and youthful Christian Church, is an amazing thing. Their secret ought to illumine, as by a lightning-flash, the method of the dealings of God with men, and it is only another illustration of the muddle of our minds that it does not.

The old view of inspiration—and of course no view of inspiration has ever been promulgated authoritatively by the Church—was that Almighty God laid controlling fingers on the hands of writers

to such an extent that He alone was responsible, not only for the theology, but also for the geography and history and psychology of what was written. As a consequence, the writer might awake, as from a trance, and scan what he himself had written, uncomprehendingly; and the reader, no matter how long after, might count on every word, and even on the absence of words, as nothing less than the work of the finger of God.

This view always led to difficulties—difficulties, for example, in any attempt to reconcile the known character of God with the hideous massacres, outrivalling either German or Turk of our times, apparently ordered by Him in Palestine; but these difficulties became plainly insurmountable the moment a detached and fearless criticism was brought to bear on the Old Testament. It is, for instance, entirely beyond doubt that the history of Kings does not square with that of Chronicles, and that Jephthah had a markedly different religious faith from that of the writer of Isaiah liii.; or that, as we have said, there is a book or two in the "Divine Library" which, at surface value, is hardly divine at all.

People are still making these discoveries and making them with pain. And yet, at the other end of the scale, men for whom the Old Testament had become, at best, an enigma, are awakening to the marvel of the divine picture therein revealed.

It is the infinite and tender patience of God

that glows like a hidden jewel in the books that we name the Old Testament. The Divine Will had brought into being a creation of which the ultimate development is not even yet in sight, and a creation of such delicate balance that nothing short of the Divine could have hoped to control its evolution without destroying its identity. As we now see, the end in view was *to sum up all things in Christ*; but to bring such a being as man to that inclusion, to prepare him, that is, that he might ultimately attain to his triumphant destiny as a *Member of the Body of Christ*, that was an accomplishment all but beyond imagination. Take the lowest Australian aboriginal, and conceive what it meant that his will and receptive powers should be so guided that he might become, at last, a St. Mary or a St. John!

We tend to lose sight of the fact that you cannot produce the highest in man by a display of fireworks or conjuring. The training of a child is, of course, a simple illustration. An Edison or a Pasteur or a Thomas à Kempis is the product of generations, and of generations of teachers who have successively toiled at the raising of the human receptive capacity and at the development of environment. Each must labour, blind to the ultimate achievement, ignorant of what has been done, content to see nothing apparently accomplished, and yet whole-heartedly in his generation.

And as for the control of that whole vast education, it is infinitely beyond finite ability at all.

This, then, is what Almighty God has done; this is the great part that He has reserved to Himself in the world scheme; and this process is what is shown us in the Old Testament. No one book reveals it wholly; each makes contribution to it; and the inspiration of the Bible lies largely in the collecting of these inimitable evidences.

There is the drama of old Job. True, it is not Job who matters; the value of the book lies in the evidence it offers of primitive man at grips with the elemental problem of pain, and of the method God used to deal with him. Not by some supernatural proclamation of a philosophy utterly beyond his comprehension, nor by the vision of an end which would have been meaningless to him, nor by delphic utterance or material auguries by which man feebly supposed, often enough, that God would work, did the Father of Heaven deal with His children; but by the age-long presentation of mighty natural workings which first riveted the attention of, and then beat out their meaning to, the sons of men. The Jew seems first to have learnt the lesson. *These are but the outskirts of His ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of Him! . . . Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.* And so Wisdom was justified of her children.

It comes to this, then: that we should abandon

the half of our worries in regard to the Old Testament. The old questions of Jonah and his whale, and Balaam and his ass, are not worth the answering. Have it the way you think the evidence points, and leave it at that! Their value does not lie there at all. But when I see at work the minds of the men of that age leading to the writing of such narratives; and when, as I compare the massed evidence, I watch the great Master throwing down His problems and leading on from answer to answer, not in a cycle of days or of individuals, but of æons and of nations, I can but bow my head in wonder and awe, and whisper to myself again the Shepherd Psalm.

XV

THE HOLY NAME

(PHILIPPIANS ii. 9–11)

IT is a happy thing that the Feasts of the Holy Name and the Transfiguration come so close together, for nothing has ever been so transfigured as that Name. Whispered in the holy purity of Mary's heart by the angel, it came to be thundered in the cynical Roman's courtyard by a blood-maddened mob of murderers, the Name that now *is above every name*, and in which even *things in heaven* bow. And these two feasts together make up a kind of lesser feast of the Incarnation, a feast to emphasise the surpassing majesty of the Incarnation as Christmas emphasises its humility.

It is a thing to wonder at, this sacred Name. Mr. Lowes Dickenson, in the *Hibbert Journal*, thought so when he wrote: "What! the Lord of the stars and of the tiger to be called by a pet name!" Exactly. We glory in it. We even trade upon it:

> Little JESUS, wast Thou shy
> Once, and just as small as I?

And we do well, for that Sacred Name is the safeguard of our humanity, the eternal promise of what that humanity can and may be. Somewhere, in that realm beyond our sight and all but beyond our thought that we glibly call Heaven, stands one Who still turns His Head at the echo of a Name as once when called from work or play by Mary in Nazareth. And He is the same as that dim God Whom early Israel feared to name at all, the God for Whom "I AM"—bare Existence—was alone fitting style. How soon one reaches the old antithesis! Such talk must be the one truth in all the world worth knowing, or the most monstrous of lies.

Christianity very early pointed out the result of faith in a named God. Marriage became a sacrament, and woman the one thing she had not been before, holy; the dead body a thing to reverence, the burial-ground God's Acre; and the whole material world neither any longer a phantom, nor, on the other hand, the only real, but something infinitely more wonderful, a medium for the expressioning of God. *Call His Name* JESUS! Then conception and birth had nothing in them derogatory even to God; then the body and humanity was not essentially imperfect; then matter had some part to play even in eternity. And the day of transfiguration showed the possible accomplished.

Now I think that this is one of the Christian

standpoints that we shall have to fight hard to establish again after the War. War—I feel, at any rate—is not evil in itself, but it is a medicine dangerous just because so powerful. War may teach tenderness, the beauty of vicarious suffering, the wonder of self-sacrifice, the transfiguration of the flesh by the spirit; but it may not. And it does not seem to have taught us that yet. The essential holiness of woman—have the London streets learnt that? And this magnificent response of women to the new call for labour, do we feel as we look at it that this is altogether the sacrifice of devoted love which will but purify the womenhood of the Empire?

If not, the reason, surely, is not far to seek. For years, before the War, the glory of humanity had been slipping away. "Modern conditions" forced it on; modern Christianity was too feeble to stay it. Modern Democracy swung us away in its strength from simple things, and understandable problems, and our homes. Glitter, dash, show, pride—what bubbles they are, and how we fought for them! And you cannot get away from it that the Church did little or nothing to stay the tide. Convention and formality laid cold hands on the quick-beating heart of its humanity.

What one tends to ask in despair sometimes is this: Is there any remedy? But surely there is. Not harder than our task was the task of the Apostles, but we must return to their methods.

There must be, not the attempt to force things from above, but the honest endeavour to leaven from below. Acts of the Senate did not make marriage sacramental, and Acts of Parliament will not make it so again. That is the error of Democracy: to suppose that the Millennium can be brought in by a Committee. Mr. Chesterton wrote of the Chinese Revolution that he was not surprised to hear that China was a Republic—any caucus strong enough could do that; but he would be surprised to hear that the Chinaman had become a republican.

The Church, then, alone can do it. She wields a power mightier than the State, but she has forgotten how to use it. Let us begin with our churches. Let people learn to love them and pray in them, learn to find them sanctuaries and homes, learn that in them, at least, they will find things simple and honest and true. Let us forget to worry about numbers: a little one soon becomes a host in the hands of God. And just as in the Old Testament the "Name" of God stood for the sum of His characteristics, so let us restore the "Name" of JESUS to our churches that our world may be again transfigured by its power.

XVI

KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE

(1 Corinthians xiii.)

I DOUBT if any text in the whole of the Bible has been more misrepresented than one of the shortest and simplest and best known of all. *Thou God seest me*: what does that mean to most of us? It would be interesting to know if there are any who do not instinctively recall their childhood when they hear the words, and couple them with a sense of fear. My own first remembrance is the story of a little girl who would steal the sugar, but who was deterred therefrom, and finally converted, by the device of her mother in writing out this text and pinning it up inside the cupboard over the sugar basin! So far as I can make out, that experience is all but universal. The text is read as a reminder that the great Commandant is always around, and that in consequence the soldier should look out not to break the military rules.

Yet Hagar had no such thought in mind when she said these words. An outcast, weary, despair-

ing, aching in body, scorched by the desert sun, and in agony for her unborn son, she felt herself deserted by God and man. Then her eye lit suddenly on the Angel of the Lord. *Thou God seest me*, she cried: Thy love has not forgotten me. The words are in no other spirit than that of the 23rd Psalm. *Thou art my Shepherd; Thou leadest me beside the still waters; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.*

Now, if there be one supreme truth in the religion of Christ, it is this: God never looks upon men other than in love. He cannot, for *God is love. He first loved us.* He does not require anything to induce Him to love us, neither the burnt-offerings of the Old Testament, nor even the Lamb of God of the new. He always has loved. He always will love, and nothing at all that men can do will make Him not love. His eyes are upon us from birth to death and beyond, and upon us in love.

But what about sin? Ah! sin brings sorrow into the loving eyes of God, often pity, sometimes just wrath, but neither sorrow nor pity nor wrath that are incompatible with love. As a matter of fact, the sort of sorrow and pity and wrath that we see in God, is due to His love and nothing else. Even His wrath is not the anger of Allah; it is the wisdom of the Father. And the deepest waters cannot quench that love.

It is this kind of love that St. Paul talks about

in his famous chapter. That is an infinitely remarkable chapter. In it the Apostle dares to say that a man may possibly strip himself of all his possessions to feed the poor, and even give his body to the flames, and yet lack true love. And if so, according to St. Paul, these things are *nothing*. That is a daring statement! This kind of love never fails: it *believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.* It thinks no evil. It is the spirit which underlies our Lord's words: Give to him that asketh of you, *despairing of no man* (R.V.). In a word, it is God's love.

Now the interesting thing is the relation of knowledge to love. St. Paul says what he does say in order to insist upon that. Prophecy, Tongues, Knowledge, *shall vanish away. We prophesy in part, and we know in part.* Yet, following after love, the greatest spiritual gift that we shall desire is knowledge—a wonderful saying. And why? Surely because to love is to desire for union with the beloved, and hence passionately to seek the road to union, which is knowledge. *If ye love Me, keep My Commandments. He that doeth the Will, shall know of the doctrine.* This kind of love, then, is the royal road to knowledge. Let us plagiarise the Father!—"I love that I may know; I do not know that I may love."

Now I believe that this is the key to religion. Far too often love is accepted as a substitute for knowledge. How often we hear it expressed or

understood: It does not matter what his beliefs are; he has a genuine love for souls! Or: Don't worry about dogmas; get him to love God and keep His Commandments! Or (on the other hand): Preach the faith, and don't bother about the rest! All these make the supreme mistake; they presume a divorce between knowledge and love.

There is no better illustration of this than the matter of the Creeds. The credal words began by being a declaration of love, and the love that bade a man use them, bade him sign and seal them with his blood. Piece by piece the faith was built up, not in order to wreck some other theological proposition, not to straiten the already strait way of life, above all not out of a too curious theological imagination; but it was built up by men who had so passionate a love towards the Person of the Redeemer, that they could not but safeguard His Name in the world. The Creeds were songs sung by hearts aflame with love that the Christian Army might go forward as one man to the battle.

It is for us, then, to get this thing clear for ourselves. Let us remind ourselves that the Knowledge of God is not an almost unnecessary by-product of Christianity, but that it is part of the Will of the Father for us, and no less important than sound morality. Let us base our attacks upon heresy on our love to the Father, and not

upon our jealousy of our brethren. And let us make that plain, as we can make it plain, both in life and teaching.

And remember this, *God so loved that He gave.* Christ died on the cross a martyr for the truth about the Father, in order to make exhibition of God's love, and in order to make possible a reconciliation between God and man. And this thing is a parable to us. Clinging to true faith because we love God too much to trifle with it, but demonstrating by our passionate service our love of the brethren, we too might bring about that reconciliation for which our Lord Himself prayed, when He said: *May they be made perfect in one.*

XVII

"LIKE A FLINT"

(St. Matthew xi. 7–12)

"I COUNT it a good day's work, if, after a battle, I have been able to say some prayers with a few dying men, and perhaps to administer the Blessed Sacrament once."—So I heard from a chaplain in Flanders this week. His letter came on top of several more I had recently seen, some unquotable here, all most curious documents. Their general trend is: (1) This War has brought no general revival of religion among our men; (2) it has shown up the incredible ignorance and paganism of the great majority; but (3) it is a magnificent personal opportunity; and (4) it has taught us a lesson we *dare not* forget when we get home, and which the Church must learn.

All these propositions seem to be open to controversy; but I am bound to confess, from what I have seen, that I believe them. The one I chiefly question is the last, for I wonder if we dare attempt what follows from it. It seems to me to be an easy thing to say, but a very hard thing to

do. Like that interesting book, *A Student in Arms*, it deals with generalities that are hard to put into practice, and that may easily fritter out into nothing. What then?

Now the other day a curiously interesting thing happened in camp. There was a sermon preached at the usual Parade Service that set the mess talking, and yet it was one of the simplest, and one would have thought most obvious, of sermons. The preacher spoke for not more than about eight minutes on the contrast between John Baptist and Herod. He said that Herod was the type of the average man, though perhaps of the average man in unusual circumstances. He was not radically bad; he was just weak on principles. He could not resist his friends; he did not know when to say "No"; he played with truths which he knew to be truths. And John was not so much gifted as straight-forward; he was just the man who acted quite straight on his principles.

That simple sermon provoked a great controversy. The men said that that line of John Baptist was just the one the Church did not take. It shirked issues. It shirked its own problems. It burked inquiries and reforms because of its own divided opinions and because of its own alliance with the world. It was afraid to face facts.

Now one gets a little tired of hearing about the mistakes of the Church—that, to begin with, is a

shirking of issues. "The Church" is a good scapegoat. Modern society has accepted the dictum, "Because my neighbour does not do his duty, therefore I need not do mine," all but universally; and it is one of the evils attendant on our huge democratic systems that "the State" or "the Church" as a rule makes an excellent "neighbour."

It seems to me that the great lesson of the War is that each one of us must look to himself. We ourselves have got to begin by doing the thing we believe to be right without respect of persons. We clergy, for instance—I cannot help thinking that we have got to give up preaching "suitably to the Church" in which we happen to be at the time. I have heard a great bishop go to a strong Low Church and preach an enthusiastic sermon on Conversion, and go next day to a High Church and preach equally enthusiastically on Confession. Now no one impugns the bishop; we all love and honour him; but is it the John the Baptist policy? If one believes both those things, it is plainly one's duty to preach Confession where it is denied, and Conversion when it is neglected.

Of course it is not only the clergy—all of us habitually live in an atmosphere of mutual deference, both morally and dogmatically. And people expect it; it is bad form not to do it; and the consequence is no one ever hears the real truth that we feel in our heart.

The spectre before which we tremble is: "What would happen if we didn't?" which, as far as one can see from the Holy Gospel, is the last thing we ought to think about. It would mean, probably, an entire re-arrangement of parties and policies and churches. It meant for John the Baptist the headman's sword, and a place among the martyr princes of the Church.

For eighteen months at least after the War there will be the most amazing re-arrangements that the world has ever seen. The world's highways will be crowded with an uncountable multitude returning home. Tension will be over enthusiasm at its height; discipline relaxed. Every man will be taking up his old life as if it were a new thing. Before one aspect of all this, one literally trembles — God alone knows how we shall come through with it. But before the immense possibilities of it, one trembles too. Out of that turmoil and moral confusion a rock might well be reared on which the kind of souls for which Christ died might place their feet and find their salvation. But it will not emerge by Acts of Parliament or decisions of bishops or any other act from above. It will emerge if you and I can set our faces like a flint in this crisis of the Kingdom to which we have been called.

XVIII

OF THE ANGELS

(2 Kings vi. 15–17)

THE Revised Version of Heb. i. 14, with one word still better rendered, gives us a very remarkable statement about the angels. They are said to be *worshipping spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit Salvation.* Like many another text, this one is packed full of thought, and we should probably mostly agree that it is legitimate to develop it. Angels, then, have a primary duty of worship, and they are sent by God upon errands which, directly or indirectly, benefit Christian people.

Personally, the chief difficulty about the angels always seems to me to be that we see so little of them. The evidence for their existence I take to be conclusive. Making every possible allowance, there is no sort of doubt, first, that every biblical writer believed in them, and believed he had sure evidence in regard to them. Secondly, the experience of the Saints in all ages has only

confirmed this testimony. And, thirdly, the universal Church, whether united or divided, has never wavered in its statements, which I take as an evident sign of the Spirit of Truth. For instance, nothing could be more direct than our own collect for St. Michael's Day.

In view of this, such questions as that of the angels at Mons become purely academic: were they, or were they not, definitely seen. That angels there are, and that angels do God's holy will on earth, is a proposition not affected for us by the Mons incident, or any other, although it is perhaps worth writing that angel incidents in connection with the War seem to me to have adequate witness. As with every other spiritual manifestation, it is unscientific to reject such witness, as is often done, on the ground that the appearances were neither of the kind nor in the way that we should expect, for nothing is plainer than that we have not sufficient data to go upon in this regard. Moreover, the more one thinks, the more one is inclined not to dogmatise. It is all but impossible to conceive of colour or form at all in the spiritual world. The most authentic angel story I know of is that of an appearance to a native, who saw the angel as black and as immense in size—his feet on the earth, his wings reaching to the sky; and this was the more remarkable because every picture of the angels that the man had ever seen showed them white

and of human height. More than likely angels go on their earthly business either invisibly or in such common guise that they are not recognisable as angels. I should not be surprised to find, one day, that I had seen far more than I knew.

But all this is by the way. The real lesson lies hid in Francis Thompson's great fire-tipped words:

> *The angels keep their ancient places;*
> *Turn but a stone and start a wing;*
> *'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,*
> *That miss the many-splendour'd thing.*

Why? I suggest that Hebrews gives us the clue: we see little of *worshipping* spirits because we have forgotten how to worship.

Worship does not consist in the saying or the hearing of prayers, in Mass or Matins, in attendance at Divine Service, in music or lights or vestments or the absence of them, although all these things may play a part in it, and Christian Worship without the Holy Sacrifice is, of course, not Christian at all. Worship belongs to *the kingdom of God within you.* It is of the spirit, and a thing which may be beautifully and rightly clothed in all of the things mentioned above. But it is greater than any of them.

Perhaps the real spirit of worship lies chiefly in an attitude of expectancy. Expectancy implies

faith: one is expectant of nothing unless one believes it to be there. He, then, who has faith in God, in His Majesty, in His omnipresence, in His desire to prove Himself the Divine Lover, in His royal supremacy over earth and sea and sky and things seen and things not seen, and who takes up that attitude of humble eager expectancy, he it is who worships. To such a one vocal prayer will at one time be helpful and at another not. Ritual will have value chiefly because that is the experience of the centuries as to what is best done, and consequently fits like a well-tried suit of clothes in which one is free not to worry about clothes at all. And the Holy Sacrifice occupies the unique place it does in Worship, because at that time Faith teaches that the Unseen is but thinly veiled from us, and consequently Expectancy is at its highest.

But it was on Thames banks and by Charing Cross that Francis Thompson found so many of his angels, and it is there we need them most. Beauty is not so much without as within a man. There is never grey in the sky to some people. For some Eden is a myth; for others there is no garden without God. Some go to church to worship; others pretend that they require blue sky and summer woods for the exercise; others again are never not worshipping. These, curiously enough, are not eager to have visible sight of the

horses and chariots of fire round about; they are more eager to know the Will of God at every turn and do it. And for them the angel messenger waits round every corner, and their eyes constantly *behold the land that is very far off.*

XIX

REMEMBER . . .

(Micah vi. 5, R.V.)

OCTOBER, in our English Kalendar, always ushers us into the reading of the Minor Prophets, into, that is, some of the finest writing in the Bible, however little understood. These vivid little books—fragments of "sermon-notes," incomplete collections of sayings, rudely strung together "visions"—glow with passion and employ magnificently every artifice of the "prophet." Biting sarcasm and vehement appeal both reveal an intense patriotism which was nothing short of a religion, and which, when it became Christian, did much to make Christianity the successful rival of Rome.

The Minor Prophets, of course, are over-difficult for general reading, especially when that reading is obliged to be without comment. The text is often obscure, and an intelligible revision would have to be far too drastic for it to have any hope of common church use. But any one who cares enough to take up the study, can very speedily

find something of the very real literary, and the vastly more important spiritual beauties of the prophets.

Probably one of the chief things to avoid is that method of reading which fixes upon some half verse of pious sentiment and weaves round it and into it developed Christian theology that is not there at all. This not only does violence to one text; it also obscures the prophetical method and meaning as a whole. The prophets have certain very definite and recurrent ideas, and certain equally definite methods of presentation, and the reader wants to get hold of one or two of these general characteristics rather than a few scraps of pious sentiment.

One such noble theme is finely expressed by the word that stands at the head of this chapter. The function of the prophet was not even primarily that of a foreteller; primarily his duty was that of interpretation. He was a man committed to the daring faith that God's hand never leaves the world He made, and that true history means nothing less than the working out of God's will. The prophet therefore conceived that to keep before the eyes of his countrymen the record of their past, and to interpret that fact, was a religious work of the utmost importance. He asked no more than to be able to step into the breach at some crisis, either of prosperity or adversity, with some such cry as *Remember from*

Shittim unto Gilgal! Remember, that is, all the storied glory of God's dealing with your race, in battle and in peace, from your first entry into this land until the smoke of your sacrifices went up from its conquered soil. Remember that He has never failed to punish—and never failed to reward; that He has saved again and again by few as by many; that He requires of you but honesty of purpose and loyalty of heart.

The imagination is stirred as one thinks of it. There was the stiff-necked forgetful race, always straying to the right hand or to the left, now wooed by lust of power, now afraid where, as like as not, no fear was, the race with its proud kings and hard-headed people and mountain-girt strongholds and (if it would) caravan and sea-borne trade; and there was the prophet, perhaps some peasant dreamer from the hills, who dared to stem the stream of popular movement by his old cry, *Lest ye forget*!

Now it would be easy to say that we want more of this, but what I want particularly to emphasise is that we want more of it from a practical and English point of view. For a hundred sermons that draw out the Divine Providence in Jewish political and ecclesiastical history, not one is preached doing the same for English. Yet that Providence is not less over us than it was over them. That is the lesson of the prophets. The cry, *Remember from Shittim unto*

Gilgal, the half, that is, of the Minor Prophets, is all but worthless to us when we but take it as it stands. What does Shittim or Gilgal—or Sinai and Jericho—mean to the average Tommy, and what can it mean? You can doubtless force a point with graphic story-telling, but the whole value of such speaking, as the prophet well knew, lay in the fact that the words struck a note, without artifice, in the hearts of his hearers from which he could go on to other things. And if we would learn from the prophets, we must learn to speak not of past Jewish history as of some unique and sacrosanct thing, but of present history and of our own past, as if it too was, as it is in truth, a mirror of God.

Curiously enough the cry to *Remember* is not, rightly interpreted, a cry to hark back to old ways—a kind of spiritual "crusted Toryism." On the contrary, it is in this that the lost power of the Jewish prophets lay, in a linked conservatism and liberalism, in an assurance born of the past to dare for the future. "Remember the old that you may brave the new!"—that was the meaning of their cry; and the meaning, too often, of their lamentation was that the people allowed themselves to drift on the floods of new forces, whereas they should have learned from their past how those same water-floods could be ridden to new victory.

That, then, is our lesson. In this amazing

world in which we find ourselves, a world in revolution, *Remember from Shittim unto Gilgal.* Remember that the dynamic of faith in the Lord Christ has proved itself, in the past, strong enough to come victorious through ages of failing faith, of moral death, of political stress, of social revolution, and that it can do the same again. Let Joshua look back over forty years and read its lesson! Then will he set his face to the crossing of Jordan "very courageous."

XX

VOCATION

(Colossians iv. 14; Ephesians iv. 1; 1 Corinthians vii. 24)

ST. LUKE occupies a place apart in the New Testament Church, and if it were not for him, we might be tempted to view that Church in a false light. It is difficult to escape, as one reads the Acts and the Epistles, from a sense that that age was so remote from our own that it affords an historic study rather than a practical help. Those in the inner circle of Church life may not feel this, but that is due to the fact that, as a rule, there is a good deal of artificiality about our position. The average man does not feel much affinity with the age of Paul. Christianity seems to him to have changed since then. Then it was heroic, miraculous, alive to an almost legendary degree; now it is—but what is it to the average man? You cannot escape from it that, whatever it is, it is something in which he feels he has no place.

In truth, I suppose, there was a side of Christianity that was not what is commonly called

heroic and miraculous then, and there is a side of Christianity which is both heroic and miraculous now; it is our view-point that is wrong. It is one of those heart-breaking problems of life that somehow or another the distorted in religion comes to be accepted for the real. While one is still young and eager that sense of unjust distortion acts like a spur, but only too soon it begins all but to choke enthusiasm. Some trick of the devil has confounded our language again. "For thirty years I've listened to padres, and I never knew what they were talking about," said a young man to me the other day; and yet I have not a doubt that the padres he had heard were on the whole convinced, eager and human men. And it is much the same with the Bible; even its simpler pages seem to speak of unreal men and things.

There is, of course, an element of truth in the charge. There have not been many Peters and may be fewer Pauls, and the Acts is the Acts of Peter and Paul almost exclusively. But there is something wonderfully modern and commonplace about St. Luke. He is understandable, and one thinks of him almost as a shrewd modern. He was, it seems to me, the educated professional man, in touch with the hard facts of life, and if an enthusiast, one whose enthusiasm was balanced by commonsense. As a matter of fact, more of the saints have been like him in this than we

sometimes allow ourselves to remember, but at all events that is his own unique position in the New Testament Church. The able writer, the man of judgment, one whose profession existed on his knowing the world of men, St. Luke deliberately judged in favour of the Christ and as deliberately threw in his lot with His Apostle.

The interesting thing about him is this: that he does not seem to have conceived of his conversion as necessitating any acceptance of the position—as Mr. Gosse says about the old pedlar who sang of the Pope—of a "volunteer evangelist." The great Evangelist—it looks very much as if he were less like an "evangelist" than any of them. He does not appear to have preached, or thrown up his work, or forgotten his grammar, or lost his sense of logic; rather he knew he had a vocation, and he therein abode with God.

Surely he preaches thereby a timeless and invaluable sermon. We have for ever to be getting ourselves back to a sense of what vocation means, and to a sense that the world is going to be Christianised in every generation, not by people who abandon their jobs, but by people who live like Christians in them.

In a certain native territory are a set of native traders who could probably do more for Christ if they would than all the priests taken together. Good fellows all, as a rule they do all but nothing. Two I have known who were converted, who

promptly closed their stores and took to "mission work." Why? "You cannot trade and be a Christian"—that is the saying, not only of those shops, but of many who stay because meat is more than the life. How pitiable a thing is this! It requires not the spirit of a St. Paul but that of a St. Luke to meet it. I fancy St. Luke would have gone on trading. And failed? And have been ruined by his dishonest competitors? I am not so sure, but of this I am sure, that that might have been so, for Christ requires some people to fail for Him. How does it run?

> Hungry, weary, tired, and old,
> I take my footsore Master's road;
> Willing to fail as Christ has failed;
> I am as Thou hast made me, God!

The mistake we make is to suppose that this old world can be slowly transformed into a heaven—can be patted into shape, so to speak, and that by "give and take" or reforms or movements or armed fists or sermons. I doubt it. It seems to me that our Lord taught that the world was to pass away, to be broken, to tear itself up. The irresistible dynamic was to be introduced into it, forcing it to choose, to condemn itself, to destroy itself. He began by setting His Face to the Cross; and we must never forget that our Blessed Lord found the inevitable cross by simply living quietly and speaking truthfully. So did St. Luke. So should we.

XXI

ALL SAINTS

(Hebrews xi. 22, 23)

IT is an interesting social fact that the average man cannot get along without saints. There never was a truer scrap of philosophy than Plato's "Man is a social animal," which comes to mean that man is meant for friendships. Friendships support and encourage him; it is by them that he is spurred to effort; it is friendship that makes his heaven.

> *I sometimes think my heaven would be*
> *An orchard and the far blue sea . . .*
> *And one dear angel, known to me.*

—I forget exactly how it goes, but it is like that. Men say that love can make a heaven of earth, and it can. And if we lose that love, what is our hope? Surely:

> And with the morn those angel-faces shine
> Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile!

There are some who seem to be able to do without friends, but in the first place I am not

sure that they really do so; and in the second, I am inclined to think that if they do, they miss the Kingdom. *Little children, love one another. . . . I have left you a commandment that ye should love one another*—it is not for nothing that words as these stand so prominently in the New Testament. Man's social instincts are developed and intensified by true religion. True religion makes him humble, and he wants to be helped; true religion makes him loving, and he wants to help.

Now friendship and the "cultus of the saints" are twin brethren. Just as a man seeks friends so he seeks saints, and would make his friends saints. We all do it. Those of us to whom the word "saint" is all but a reproach, do it as much as any one else. There is a fine passage in *The Student in Arms*, which points out that the least likely Tommy has an ideal of manliness which is, as a matter of fact, the Church's conception of the Christ; and every Tommy all but "worships" those in whom he sees something of this. Even *The Student in Arms* has his *Beloved Captain*. It is the world-wide instinct. Every boy worth his salt has his gallery of heroes upon whom, consciously or unconsciously, he moulds himself. Every statesman, every soldier, every minister of religion, every living soul who is keen on his profession, has his haloed saints whom he surrounds with what is, in fact, an atmosphere of

prayer—for the smallest part of prayer is petition. He thinks of them, he copies them, he consults them, if possible; he seeks their company, and still more, he gives them a place in his secret soul, which is the holier as he is clean and manly.

It is all so simple; yet what a drear distortion our queer religious consciences give to it! I knew an old saint who would talk with glowing words of Abraham, Enoch, Daniel, and Job, and whose heaven lay before him, a dear place where familiar friends dwelt, and yet the hagiology of Catholicism was anathema to him. A Spurgeon's Tabernacle gibes at the "superstition" of a St. Mary's Church. And, on the other hand, we offend with our doctrines just because we set them in an artificial light instead of emphasising their common sense and practicability.

We, in the Church, have to our hand in the Kalendar of our Saints one of the finest weapons for the conquest of the souls of men that was ever forged. The appeal to the imagination stands easily first among methods for the conversion of souls, and the craving for what I have called friendship is one of the commonest and most elemental needs of men. We possess, in the stories of our saints, an imaginative stimulus unrivalled by any other in the history of the world. The loyalty of martyrs, the cool insolent daring of confessors, the unutterable reckless

romance of missions, the spiritual world-conquests achieved by such as Francis of Assissi or Joan of Arc, all these lie ready to our hands. And we all but never use them! We tell Old Testament stories, but, without the least suggestion of irreverence to the sacred Scriptures, there is not a story in that collection which cannot be surpassed in the annals of the Catholic saints. Why in the world we should expect it to be otherwise, I do not know. Surely A.D. should be a more glorious record than B.C.! Yet our saints' days come and go, and we priests ourselves do not take the trouble to learn their stories. One hears high dignitaries argue for the omission of such names as Lucian, Cosmos and Damian, or Prisca, from our already scandalously robbed Kalendar, using, as an argument and a joke, that they know nothing of them. In all the records of human fatuousness this would be difficult to beat.

Are these hard words? God knows I would not wish them to be. But All Saints' Day always comes round to sadden rather than to cheer. If I might make a personal confession, I would say how Butler's *History of the Saints*, in a pocket edition, has been my sole book, other than the New Testament, on many a long and lonely trek, and that it has inspired and comforted, rebuked and warned, gladdened and amused and saddened, a hundred times. It has peopled heaven for me,

and it has done more; it has transformed earth. And—although one does not like to talk about these things—I have not found that companionship with the whole company of heaven hides our Lord.

XXII

UNITY

(St. John xvii.)

FAR more often than we do, we ought to face the great question of Christian Unity, for it is surely not possible to doubt that disunion among Christians is contrary to the very spirit of Christianity, and the chief cause of that general religious impotence which cannot be denied. That uniquely solemn last prayer of our Blessed Lord should be the centre of our study. There it stands, His final prayer-pleading for the world under those human conditions which He had come to support. That we have it to read at all can be none other than divine providing, and whether prayed in Gethsemane or not, the spirit of it is the spirit of the *sweat as it were great drops of blood.* It was His last prayer. Upon the eternal throne, Christ would indeed make eternal intercession by reason of His Nature, human and divine, but not again would He pray as we use the word. It is the last prayer-agony of Him who died for men. And two great burden

notes ring through its every line—Love and Unity.

Love and Unity—it is the union of these that offers the key to our difficulties. You cannot have unity without love, and where there is love there is no real disunion. It is easily possible, and only too common, to make a cheap point that we want unity and not uniformity, whereas, in point of fact, real unity is bound to make for a great measure of essential uniformity; but without question the only unity worth having is a union based on love. A common love of our Blessed Lord and of the brethren is a solvent in which nine-tenths of that which goes to make up disunion melts away. Jealousy, prejudice, hasty criticism, misunderstanding—all these disappear before love, and, moreover,—and it is a great point,—*perfect love casteth out fear.* If there were no fear in religious controversy, no fear lest the other man should score a point, no fear lest he should seek his own glory or gain, no fear lest the issue should seem to shame our own past, there would be little left of controversy.

Love begins by the remembrance that by far the greater number of those who differ from us do so because they honestly believe that they are thereby working towards the same goal as ourselves by a better way. They do not differ from us for their own sakes, but for the sake of God. I am, of course, speaking of those who hold con-

sidered positions; and to a man who is so placed there is only one thing that can be said: I would not have you otherwise: go on and the Lord guide you. What else can one say? How can one ask a man who believes that he is what he is with all his heart for the sake of God, to be something else for the sake of me? It cannot be done. The initial judgment can only be: You must not do otherwise as yet. And that once said, that renunciation made for the sake of truth and love, and behold Union is knocking at the door.

Secondly, Love is humble. Two lovers of God and of one another in the Christian sense, will only tolerate that coming between them which is, as they see it, an essential principle, and the very sorrow which a recognition of some such difference breeds, does much to narrow it down. Private opinions will not keep two such men apart. Differences which are of the essence of faith must separate until some solution from God be given, but things which we ourselves know to be only the result of our own sense of logic or of history or of common sense will never do so. And love will separate the gold from the lesser metal—I will not say the dross—quickly enough, only to show that there is more of the precious metal held in common than seemed possible.

Let us be practical a moment. Half the great dividing questions of our day resolve themselves

into the simplest elements in this crucible of love. Take the question of Orders. The Christian world falls into two camps on this question: those who believe in Holy Orders as conferred by virtue of the Church because *the Body is Christ*, and those who deny regular orders at all. It is not the bishop who, in our faith, confers regular orders on me, but the bishop as the medium of the Church, which is Christ. My Presbyterian brother whole-heartedly embraces that proposition, but to him the medium of expression is not the chief presbyter alone, but the body of the elders. The other half of Christendom does not believe that such regular orders exist or were meant to exist; it does not claim them; it can hardly be angry with me if I therefore do not attribute them to it. It claims prophetical orders—the direct call of God. But we have almost forgotten that prophecy truly exists, and that there is nothing antagonistic between such and regular orders. They are complementary.

Consider the Blessed Sacrament of unity. What, of faith, holds those apart who agree that here (1) is a special blessing dependent on a special Presence, and that (2) the elements are the divinely appointed media for the obtaining of such blessing? What do I believe more, *of faith*? True, I insist on calling them the Body and Blood of Christ—and who would decline to allow me to name them by His own name for them?—but

what do I, in my finitude, know of the content of the infinite mysteries that I name so? God give us mutual love, the love that will not deny to me the right to reserve and worship what my brother, for the same end, considers should be best as reverently consumed, and humble lovers of the Master from twenty churches will draw near together to the Sacrament of Love.

Your young men shall see visions. I do not fear to say that I see a vision, a vision of the Kingdoms of this World rocking before the thunder of the Name of JESUS from ten thousand throats as one, and the world shall know yet that the visionary, with eyes alight and heart aflame, is right when he maintains that there is no such word as "impossible" in the vocabulary of God. *The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this.*

XXIII

ADVENT

(Revelation xxii. 20)

Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

IT is a wonderful saying. In Apostolic days they said it, and scanned the heavens for the immediate signs of His appearing. As the centuries lengthened, in catacomb and prison cell, faith still repeated the triumphant words expectantly, still threw them back at consul and magistrate in a grim defiance of the hideous present. By the time of the world's conversion the phrase was liturgical, and maybe fewer hearts had still the old longing as Advent came round; but the Church's witness was undiminished. And so on, year by year, it has been. Now expectancy has been high, and now despondency; from persecuted souls on Scottish moors or Virginian plantations or in Elizabethan prisons, the song has come again and again no whit less defiantly than of old; in days of carelessness or power, as often all but mechanically;

but still, from mud mission church and from Gothic cathedral it rings out:

Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

We live in a sceptical age, and there are few of us who do not wonder questioningly as the old message comes round. How can it come about? we ask. Shall we really see a vision in the clouds of heaven and hear the sound of the trump, or is that but figurative language telling of what will come in obedience to natural laws? Frankly I feel that I do not know, but I am content to use the old terms to myself and leave the rest against the day of His so certain re-appearing. For the Advent, with all its difficulty, is one of those fixed points in theological philosophy from which one argues as axiomatic. One cannot believe in the eternity of the world as we know it; one cannot doubt that the Incarnate has us still in His Heart.

But then again, from another point of view, our age is curiously credible. Prophets—even of the year—of the Advent are as many among us now as they have ever been in the story of the Church, and since they are as a rule singularly pious people, it is unkind to smile. But, writing on the Advent, one is bound to say that their arguments seem to have little weight. Theories based on the Number of the Beast or the weeks of

Daniel leave us a little unmoved; and even the vague forecasts based on the return of the Jews and so on, depend so much on questionable theories of inspiration, and rather doubtful comparative politics, that they are hard to accept. *No man knoweth the day or the hour. . . . He shall come as a thief in the night.* . . . These seem more likely texts. But it matters little which way it is; in fifty years I shall certainly see Him, anyhow.

That is the thought, then, that I link with Advent. *This same* JESUS. . . . This seems to me to be the emphasis the Church would lay. It says to tired hearts, confused and perplexed by novel movements and incredible changes: "One thing at least is sure. That same JESUS whom you know so well by faith, Whose beauty entrances you, for Whose rest you long, shall come to thee, O child of the new Israel." Our meeting will be the coming home. *Even so, come, Lord* JESUS.

I would like, if it be possible, to paint a word-picture of what I mean. . . . It was very confusing, that entry into the Army and that arrival in France. Everything in life seemed upset, and privacy and opportunities for the worship one loves were all but entirely gone. Also the terrible cataclysm of the World War seemed so stunning near at hand. Northern France was one large camp, and one incredible medley of nations; and men, though everywhere kindly, seemed

universally to have accepted the disappearance of the old faith and its restraints and hopes. One evening, then, of no special significance, I left the camp and crossed the busy canal, by the huge munition factory whose clangour never ceased by day or night, and the great aerodrome whence came and went hourly strange new tokens of man's mastery of things, and sought a curious little half-built stone church that had been begun in this suburb of a big port before the War, and had been left stranded forlornly among so engrossing claims on space and time. We found the daily Benediction just beginning. It was very French; it shattered every liturgical convention; it had no sophistry of art or music to bolster it. There was a fat and rather indifferent priest, and one server; a sharp-faced woman lit a dozen candles and rang a bell; and the congregation gathered. I looked around. There were half a dozen peasant women of uncertain age; an old wrinkled soul with a calm and childish face that one looked at twice; a few children; a French marine; three German prisoners and their guard, his rifle in the porch; a couple of Americans; three or four English Tommies, and the colonel of a Cavalry regiment, grim and sad-faced; a black Mosuto and his padre; and myself. The women sang the service unlovelily and unaccompanied; the day was dull and smoky without and within; the church garish.

And then came the vision—if it be vision; call it what you will. What a company!—from three Continents, friend and foe, and *not many noble, not many wise*. . . . Half were there because of their simple unspotted innocence; the rest of us because we lacked that so. And what were we doing? Clinging, like shipwrecked mariners who have no other hope, to the great rock of faith in the incarnate Son, in the Saving Victim, clinging, despite all change and fear and scepticism to the one Hope in this dark world of sin. And the world-wide, century-battered Church held out to us the homely, tender, simple, all-sufficing Saviour Whose Name our mothers taught us, oh! so long ago.

And I bowed my head, and the old hope rolled up within, all but to tears:

Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

Even so, come, Lord JESUS.

XXIV

CHRISTMAS

(St. Luke ii. 1–17)

CHRISTMAS closes the year, and I have heard people say that they think it misplaced. I am not among them. To me there is something infinitely tender in the (I suppose) unpremeditated arrangement, for Christmas is the festival of Home, and it is good to come home at the close of the year. It is just the right sort of home too. One tires of palaces and civilisations and modernities; but none are here. Only the fragrant straw and the hillside and the clear white stars and the wise, patient beasts and the deep mystery of mother-love, always the type, but here the actual sacrament of the divine. In cities our artificialities fall off before it hardly, and we smile as we go to church, and excuse our cribs with talk of the children—yet we go; but on the veld and the berg, among the kraals and the cattle, we recognise without a wonder, and with only a glad joy, that this is our true home.

It is the home of the Prodigal. God did very

wisely when He cradled in the manger, for that Baby is a perfect picture of Him. Given love in the father's heart, the little child suffers the touch of the soiled and hard hand without a thought as to the dreadful business of sin that that hand may have been about, and yet more tears of penitence are shed by the side of unconscious children than anywhere else. And the Divine Child holds out innocent baby hands, and we cannot stay away. Oh yes, He knows! He knows! but knowing, He put the sign of knowledge from Him, and calls us to the unstained purity of the Mother and the Manger. He calls to the Mother and the Cradle, where, men are agreed, there can be no barrier or selfishness or reproach. It is God's own wonderful trysting-place with men, and they come wearily there, year by year, after the long journey down the days of conflict and of failure, and of gain found little worth.

Yet the cradle is the start and not the goal. It is of the future that one invariably thinks there, and, after all, it is for that that God brings us to His crib. For there is always time before us—another year to begin; and when we have done beginning years, we shall have to begin eternity. Nor is it our own future only to which we go away from Bethlehem. There is appeal in the outstretched arms of the Infant JESUS: What will you do with Me? We close the year, by

God's mercy, with absolution, made white again as those Child hands, but as we kneel there we are bound to ask if we shall pierce them in the coming days. Shall we have a part once more in bringing those Baby Feet to Calvary, in weaving thorns for that Baby Brow? Where better, then, to make the fierce resolve to be *more than conqueror through Him that strengtheneth us*?

The manger again, reset as it was last year, though we have strayed and sorrowed so far and heavily in the days between, is a dear sign of renewal. One comes almost with surprise year by year to the crib. It seems as if He could never condescend to be *thus, again*, after all that we have done. It seems as if the companionship of Mary and of Joseph and of the Angels about that manger could never be again for us; and yet they are all waiting there for us to join them. Oh tender parable! *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as wool. Whosoever cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He set our sins from us.*

Bethlehem, too, makes that demand of us with which the Christian pilgrimage of necessity both begins and closes. In these days there are many Christians who try to dispense with Faith. They are Christians because it seems reasonable to believe in a Supreme Author and "Prime Mover," and because Christianity, rightly understood, is so

excellent a moral code. Bethlehem, then, comes to remind us that that is not Christianity at all. It is all right as far as it goes, but Christianity stands for more. It stands for belief in the supernatural, in the divine interposition in human affairs, and that after a manner that is ultimately inexplicable. *The Saviour wrapped in swaddling clothes*—that is the Christian discovery. It is no use pretending anything different in order to "reconcile modern thought." It is just here that the whole wonder of our holy religion lies, together with its tenderness and mysteries and power. True, not all—not many—can stoop to the low door of the cave-stable. Our Lord, in a score of sayings, sadly recognised it. Two classes only, indeed, as has been often pointed out, can do so—the Wise Men who have made their eyes keen enough to search down the vista of God and have found it infinite, they come and are not surprised. They have learned that He who is *past finding out*, offers other proofs than the scientific and mathematical. And the Shepherds, who have used their eyes to see the simple natural things of life and are not blinded by the glare of cities and their dust, they too have learned those other and intuitive proofs. There is something in the group at Bethlehem, something in the eyes of Mary (the Woman of women, and all women know as we do not) and in that little Child, that goes right to the heart of Kings and Shepherds,

And they open their richest gifts and worship—by Faith we say, Faith that is the diviner kind of knowledge.

But what if one is neither a Shepherd nor a King—and most of us are neither. We would be, but both that keen vision and that simple sight have meant an innocence that we have forfeited and an endurance that we seem never to have had a hope of having—is it not so? Yet we have come to a wisdom, born of failure and of tears—the certainty that these men from the hills and these night-watchers are sure guides. So we, too, stumble in. *Lord*, we whisper, *I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.* And one does not feel the rough stones on which one kneels, nor does the keen wind of the sleeping world outside, that chills and pierces usually, matter any more, for in the Face of that Child and of His Mother is written the love that rewards the venture of faith, and the vision, to the tired heart and weary hand, is peace.

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